



October 17, 2006

Trust for America's Health (TFAH) commends the California Health and Human Services Agency and the Department of Health Services for their groundbreaking efforts to ensure the state's readiness for a public health emergency. We believe that California is at the forefront of pandemic influenza preparedness nationally. The state's approach to planning for medical surge capacity during a catastrophic health emergency and the willingness of state government to exercise emergency preparedness plans across state agencies and with outside stakeholders are especially noteworthy.

Just last week in Los Angeles, the state's senior health leadership, including Secretary Belshé and Director Shewry, participated in a day-long pandemic influenza exercise. Sponsored by TFAH, this exercise was the first in the country to bring together multiple layers of government and leaders from the private sector, educators, health care experts and representatives from community-based organizations to test a state's readiness to respond to a major health emergency. The purpose of the exercise was to learn how government decisions and interventions during an influenza pandemic would impact other sectors of society. Equally important, the drill informed state health officials about the ability of non-governmental sectors to prepare for and respond to a severe pandemic. Lessons learned during the event include:

- The need for a well-coordinated, well-funded state-wide public education campaign on pandemic preparedness;
- The importance of paying increased attention to vulnerable populations and community resilience in the wake of a major health emergency;
- The need for an expanded dialogue with businesses, both large and small, to assure that they are fully engaged in pandemic preparedness activities and know what they can and cannot reasonably expect from the government sector; and,
- The ongoing need to strategically include other sectors of society, especially community and faith-based organizations, in emergency preparedness planning and exercises.

A documentary film and an after-action report from the California pandemic preparedness exercise will be shared with public health leaders nationally, so that those entrusted with protecting the public's health throughout the United States can learn from the vision and experience of California's senior health leadership.

Based in Washington, D.C., Trust for America's Health is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to saving lives by protecting the health of every community and working to make disease prevention a national priority.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey Levi".

Jeffrey Levi, PhD  
Executive Director